



Square Roots

Marietta was mixing it up before “mixed-use” was cool.
By BETSY RILEY

MARIETTA IS WHAT new urbanist enclaves like Atlantic Station or Serenbe hope to be when they grow up. The town’s central greenspace, Glover Park, is shaded by century-old trees and rimmed with free curbside parking. Thanks to a plentiful number of antique shops, several museums, Cobb County government buildings, and the well-maintained park itself, the square constantly bustles with a multigenerational (and increasingly multicultural) crowd. And if local shops and restaurants are somewhat less sophisticated than their big-city counterparts, they are also more affordable and neighborly.

When named an All-America City in 2006 by the National Civic League—one of the nation’s most established community achievement awards, given to recognize grassroots involvement and cooperation—Marietta achieved an honor no other Georgia city has claimed in more than thirty years. The town’s unified spirit is espe-

cially remarkable given its changing demographics. (*Money* magazine gave Marietta an impressive racial diversity index of 268.2 versus a national average of 100.)

Thanks in part to nearby universities and recent loft developments, the 176-year-old town also attracts its share of hipsters. No doubt young urbanites are attracted to Marietta’s authentic mixed-use nature, where sidewalks and front porches never went out of style and one can still navigate by the train tracks, the steeples, and, of course, the Big Chicken.

LIVING HERE Founded in 1832, Marietta has five nationally recognized historic districts. Stately nineteenth-century Greek Revival and Victorian mansions, plus quaint early-twentieth-century bungalows, reflect the town’s longtime prosperity as the county seat and a railroad stop. Homes near the square range from the low \$200,000s for unrenovated cottages and smaller ranch houses to \$1 million or more for grand historic properties.

A recent spurt of new close-in developments, including loft complexes, townhomes, and detached housing, has stalled somewhat due to the economy. At press time, though, a luxurious, EarthCraft-certified, three-bedroom townhouse from

award-winning HEDGEWOOD HOMES was listed for less than \$300,000.

Marietta’s eleven city schools all met No Child Left Behind standards in 2007. MARIETTA HIGH SCHOOL, which moved into a sparkling new facility in 2001, flies the flags of forty-two countries representing the nationalities of its students and offers the International Baccalaureate Programme. That, along with an innovative elementary-school magnet, provides the district with advanced academic opportunities.

LOCAL DISH Marietta’s dining scene on or near the square consists of Australian, Irish, Italian, Turkish, French, Greek, Thai, Colombian, Chinese, and Mexican eateries, including local favorites BLU GREEK TAVERNA (26 Mill Street, 770-429-4096, blugreek-taverna.com), WILLIE RAE’S (25 North Park Square, 770-792-9995, willieraes.net), and EFE’S TURKISH VEGETARIAN AND MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE (113 North Park Square, 770-419-0159, efesrestaurant.com).

For those with a sweet tooth, Marietta’s bakeries are three of the best in metro Atlanta: GABRIEL’S DESSERTS & SANDWICHES TOO (800 Whitlock Avenue, 770-427-9007, gabrielsdesserts.com), DOUCEUR DE FRANCE (367 Glover Street, 770-425-5050, douceurdefrance.com), and a location of LA SUPREMA BAKERY (12 Cobb Parkway, 770-794-0110, lasupremabakery.com), a glittering emporium with pink marble walls and

crystal chandeliers, just across from the famed Big Chicken—which opened in 1963 as Johnny Reb’s Chick, Chuck, and Shake.

SEE & DO In Marietta, nostalgia reigns. There are more than a dozen antique shops, various locomotive relics, KENNESAW MOUNTAIN NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD, and historic driving and walking tours with fifty-seven landmarks, including both Union and Confederate cemeteries. The litany of museums includes one dedicated to firefighting; the surprisingly endearing MARIETTA MUSEUM OF HISTORY (the octopus-like permanent wave machine from a 1930s beauty shop is a must-see); the Marietta *GONE WITH THE WIND* MUSEUM (check out the telegram sent to David Selznick suggesting Henry Fonda for the role of Ashley); a meticulously restored pioneer residence once belonging to William Root; and the modest MARIETTA/COBB MUSEUM OF ART, located in a delightfully old, creaky post office.

For entertainment, try THEATRE IN THE SQUARE (11 Whitlock Avenue, 770-422-8369, theatreinthesquare.com), which is in its twenty-sixth season of staging both sweetly sentimental and groundbreaking performances. The long-awaited renovation of THE STRAND THEATRE, an art deco movie palace (friendsofthestrands.com), is scheduled for completion by late fall. And almost any time of year, there is a festival or concert taking place in Glover Park. ■